

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

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R 091735Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9692

S E C R E T 8569

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, EAID, CG, BE

SUBJ: ARMS SALES TO ZAIRE

REF: STATE 222193

1. PURSUANT TO REFTEL I BRIEFED AMBASSADOR KERREMANS
OCT 9 ON STATUS OF US-ZAIRE ARMS TALKS.

2. KEEREMANS SAID MOBUTU HIMSELF HAD TOLD HIM ABOUT M-16'S.
HE ALSO TOLD ME BEFORE I MENTIONED NUMBERS THAT HE KNEW
GOZ WAS SEEKING SIX MORE C-130'S TO SUPPLEMENT THREE
ALREADY DELIVERED AND THREE ON ORDER. AIR DEFENSE AND
TANK/ANTI-TANK REQUIREMENTS WERE APPARENTLY NEWS TO HIM.

3. MOBUTU, IN TELLING HIM ABOUT M-16'S, HAD PUT IT IN
CONTEXT OF HOW HE, MOBUTU, WAS GETTING WHAT HE WANTED
FROM BIG POWERS. PRESIDENT HAD TOLD KERREMANS THAT US
HAD DELAYED FOR LONG TIME ON M-16'S AND ONLY MOVED WHEN
US DISCOVERED HE COULD AND WOULD GET COMPARABLE WEAPONS
ELSEWHERE. MOBUTU HAD USED PHRASE TO HIM WHICH I AM
COMING TO KNOW WELL, "JE NE SUIS PAS LE VALET DES
AMERICANS. JE NE SUIS PAS LET VALET DE PERSONNE".
MOBUTU HAD NOT ASKED HIM FOR ARMS BUT IT WAS IMPLICIT
IN MOBUTU'S PRESENTATION THAT OFFER FROM BELGIUM WOULD
BE WELCOME. KERREMANS SAID HE WAS CONVINCED MOBUTU HAD
DECIDED HE NEEDED ARMS AND HE WAS GOING TO HAVE THEM.

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4. KERREMANS OBSERVED THAT INTEREST IN TANKS WAS

PARTICULARLY DISTURBING SINCE THEY COULD GO TO CABINDA
OR LUANDA.

5. I TOLD HIM WE HAD BEEN ASKING QUESTIONS OF ZAIROIS
MILITARY BUT THAT ANSWERS HAD BEEN SLOW IN COMING.
(GENERAL MOLONGYA CANCELLED SCHEDULED OCT 7 MEETING
WITH ZAMISH). I WAS UNCERTAIN AS TO EXPLANATION BECAUSE
IMPORTANCE OF TIMING PRIOR TO VISIT TO MOSCOW HAD BEEN
MADE CLEAR.

6. KERREMANS ALSO SAID HE HAD HEARD THAT MOBUTU WOULD
GO ON FROM MOSCOW TO PYONGYAND. HOWEVER, WHEN HE HAD
ASKED PRESIDENCY DIRECTOR BISENGIMANA, WITH WHOM HE HAS
LONG-STANDING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP DATING FROM WELL
BEFORE HIS ARRIVAL HERE, BISENGIMANA, WHILE NOT DENYING
THAT THIS POSSIBLE, HAD DISCOUNTED ITS LIKELIHOOD.
BISENGIMANA HAD ALSO BRUSHED OFF IMPORTANCE OF MOSCOW
VISIT. (WHILE WE DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT HOW THINGS
WORK HERE, IT IS MY IMPRESSION, BASED IN PART ON WHAT
BISENGIMANA HAS TOLD US ABOUT HELICOPTER SITUATION,
THAT HE IS NOT KEPT FULLY INFORMED ABOUT MOBUTU'S THINKING
RE ARMS). KERREMANS SAYS THAT APART FROM DISCUSSIONS
WITH DUTCH RE TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT HE KNOWS OF NO SIMILAR
RECENT OVERTURES TO OTHER EUROPEAN SUPPLIES (E.G.,
FRENCH, BRITISH, GERMANS) BUT HE SUSPECTS ITALIANS
MAY HAVE BEEN APPROACHED. THERE WERE TO HAVE BEEN
BILATERAL MILITARY TALKS IN ROME THIS MONTH AS WELL
AS IN BRUSSELS, BUT BOTH HAVE BEEN POSTPONED, IF NOT
CANCELLED. KERREMANS THINKS THIS IS BACAUSE COMPETENT
SENIOR OFFICERS HERE ARE FEW IN NUMBER AND FULLY
OCCUPIED AT PRESENT.

7. KERREMANS SPECULATED THAT SOVIETS HAVE LONG WISHED
ACHIEVE INFLUENTIAL POSITION IN ZAIRE AND NOTED THAT IN
ANY CASE THEY HAVE SAMS AND TANKS READILY AVAILABLE.
SOVIET MOTIVES COULD BE PURELY COMMERCIAL OR MUCH MORE
AMBITIOUS - OR BOTH. HE ALSO WONDERED IN PASSING WHY
SO MANY ROMANIANS WERE ARRIVING.

8. HE HAD NO POLICY SUGGESTIONS. WHILE OBSERVING THAT
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FORTHCOMING ATTITUDE MIGHT KEEP SOVIET MILITARY OUT AND
HOLD NORTH KOREAN MILITARY PRESENCE TO MINIMUM, HE
SPECULATED MOBUTU MORE LIKELY TO TAKE WHATEVER HE CAN
GET THESE DAYS FROM ANYONE, TO WHICH I REPLIED, PERHAPS,
BUT THAT COULD BE PART OF A DISCUSSION, PARTICULARLY
SINCE ONE COULD VIEW WHAT KERREMANS REPEATEDLY CALLS
BLACKMAIL AS SINCERE STATEMENT OF PREFERENCE FOR US
ARMS.

9. FINALLY, KERREMANS MENTIONED THAT HIS PEOPLE
SENSED CONSIDERABLE UNREST AMONGST JUNIOR ARMY OFFICERS
AND THAT TROOP MORALE WAS PRESENTLY POOR.

10. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH REPEAT THIS MESSAGE TO
OTHER CONCERNED POSTS.

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